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THE PENTATEUCHAL QUESTION.

After all, there is no biblical question which is of such fundamental importance, and of such general interest as the Pentateuchal Question. We have before us the first two of a series of twelve papers by as many distinguished Scholars and Professors of the United States, edited by T. W. Chambers, D. D., LL. D., of New York. The list* both of subjects and names is a most interesting and inspiring one.

We give herewith a selection from each of the papers which have thus far appeared. The first, from the paper of Dr. Chambers, presents very clearly and succinctly the considerations which may be urged against a late date for the Pentateuch and the arguments in support of such a date.

"(1) The total lack of external evidence in its favor. All that we know from sacred or secular sources is on the side of the traditional view. (2) The acknowledged inconsistencies that remain. If the matter of the Hexateuch has been so often revised as the prevailing theory declares, how comes it to pass that so many seeming contradictions continue to be found, so many divergencies in tone, in spirit, in conception? On the ordinary view these are to be expected, but by no means on the other. (3) It is vain to say that Moses was not cultivated enough to write the books attributed to him, for he was trained in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, who, in his day, had, as we know, an abundant and varied literature. (4) There is no reason to dispute the existence of a priesthood in his day, since it is clear that there was a large priestly caste in Egypt, and it is in the last degree improbable that a Hebrew priesthood should wait a thousand years, or even the half of that period, for a ritual. (5) The theory that denies everything but a few fragments to the Mosaic period, and relegates all psalms and proverbs to a post-exilian date, leaves a long period of history without any literature, and offers no basis for the splendid outburst of prophecy which illumined the eighth century before Christ. (6) The principle that the non-observance of a law proves its non-existence is wholly fallacious. (7) The language of the Hexateuch is inconsistent with a late origin. Its parts differ among themselves, but in nothing like the degree in which they differ from the Hebrew of the Persian era. (8) The local allusions throughout are to Egypt; how could this possibly be if these writings received their last reduction from persons all whose surroundings were Palestinian or Babylonian? (9) There are continual references to a life in the

* I. Introductory Historical Sketch of Pentateuchal Criticism (Dr. T. W. Chambers). II. The Hebrew Religion not a Natural Development (Prof. Gardiner, of Theological Seminary, Middletown, Conn.). III. Analysis of the Codes (Prof. Bissell, of Theological Seminary, Hartford). IV. Pentateuchal Analysis (Prof. Green, of Princeton). V. Testimony of the Pentateuch to Itself, Direct and Indirect (Prof. Schodde, of Capital University, Ohio). VI. Testimony of the Historical Books, save Chronicles (Prof. Beecher, of Auburn Theological Seminary). VII. Testimony of the Books of Chronicles (Prof. M. S. Terry, Illinois). VIII. Testimony of the Prophetic (and Poetical) Books (Prof. Harman, of Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pa.). IX. Credulity or Faith, or the Difficulties of the New Hypotheses (Prof. Streibert, Gambier, O.). X. Bearings of the New Hypothesis on Questions of Biblical Theology, Inspiration, and the authority of the Bible generally (Prof. Dwinnell, Pacific Theological Seminary, Oakland, Cal.). XI. Validity and Bearing of the Testimony of Christ and his Apostles (Prof. Hemphill, of Louisville, Ky.). XII. A Reasonable Hypothesis of the Origin of the Pentateuch (Prof. Osgood, of Rochester Theological Seminary).

wilderness, a journeying through the desert; what could suggest these to men whose whole lives were passed in fertile and cultivated regions? (10) The doctrinal contents of the Hexateuch, being simple and elementary, are in harmony with the traditional date and not the imaginary one. (11) The modern theory abounds in license. Because King Josiah found 'the book of the law' in the temple, it is insisted, without the shadow of reason, that this book was Deuteronomy, which had just been written, and had been secreted in order that it might be found! Ezekiel's splendid idealization of the church of the future is, in defiance of all taste and judgement, converted from a magnificent symbolic prophecy into the prosaic outline of a new ritual then for the first time introduced! (12) The Jewish Rabbis enumerate five things wanting in the second temple which were found in the first (the Shekinah, the ark and mercy seat, the spirit of prophecy, the Urim and Thummim and the fire on the altar); but if these were inventions of Ezra and his associates, what possible motive did they have for constructing a style of worship which would only make more evident the baldness of their own services? (13) In some cases the theory rests upon the philosophical postulate that religion in any case is only a natural development, the supernatural being impossible and incredible; this is certainly the view of Kuenen and Wellhausen, yet no man who holds it can possibly be a fair interpreter of Scripture. (14) These latter writers not only exclude the divine factors from the history of Israel, but assert the existence of fictions in that history, not merely in single, separate instances, but *passim*, wherever a patch was needed to give the story an air of authority. (15) The analysis of the documents is based often upon very subtle criteria, is frequently mechanical, and again makes assumptions that are purely conjectural; hence there is serious difficulty in accepting its conclusions when they are at war with the statements of the history itself. (16) The existence of different documents is no argument against the Mosaic authorship, for the man of God may have compiled his first book from antecedent data, and in those that followed may have reduced into form what had previously been put in writing by others under his direction. Conjecture is just as allowable in favor of Moses as it is against him. (17) So in regard to the book of Joshua, the natural complement of the Pentateuch, there is nothing strained or unnatural in the opinion that some of the men trained under the guidance of the great lawgiver made this record. (18) The testimony of the New Testament is clear and strong as to the Mosaic authorship. Our Lord said (John 5:46) of Moses, 'He wrote of me,' and in the next verse speaks of 'his writings.' No principle of accommodation will explain this language. In Mark 12:26 he asked, 'Have ye not read in the book of Moses?' So the Apostle Peter said (Acts 3:22), 'Moses indeed said: A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.' And the Apostle Paul cites the Pentateuch in the terms, 'It is written in the law of Moses,' and again, 'Moses saith,' and again 'Moses describeth the righteousness that is of the law' (1 Cor. 9:9; Rom. 10:19; 10:5). It does not seem possible to understand these references as meaning anything else than the accepted view of that age, that Moses was the author of the books that bear his name."

From Dr. Gardiner's paper we take an interesting presentation of the difference between Hebrew and heathen sacrifices:

"Closely related with the idea of sin was the practice of sacrifice. This practice, whencesoever derived, was substantially universal in the ancient world. Everywhere among men there was a consciousness of having offended

the superior powers and an effort to propitiate them by sacrifice. The Hebrew sacrifices, however, are so distinguished from those of other nations in two points as to make them an essentially different institution. (1) Elsewhere sacrifice might be offered by any one, without regard to his character; and (2) it was customary to increase the value of the offering—even to the extent sometimes of providing human victims—in proportion to the magnitude of the offense. The underlying idea, therefore, of these sacrifices, was the offering to the offended deity an equivalent for the offense—a *quid pro quo*, a compensation for the wrong done—so that no further penalty could justly be exacted. Hence there was very little of a moral character about the transaction. If the offerer had returned a sufficient compensation he was quit, and the matter ended. It is no wonder that such men as Socrates saw the folly of such sacrifice. They knew the institution only in its perversion, and had no means of finding out its deeper and truer use. In Israel it was far otherwise. Sacrifices were allowed by the law only for ‘sins of ignorance’—rather of inadvertence, of carelessness, of being led away by temptation and passion; for sins committed with a ‘high hand,’ with a full knowledge of their wrongfulness and the defiance of a proud heart, no sacrifice was allowed (Num. 15:30; Deut. 17:12). This fact alone gives a totally different character to sacrifice in the two cases, because it introduces a moral element, and makes their acceptance depend upon motive and character.

“The second point is, if possible, still more distinctive. While the idea of sacrificial compensation was carried out among the heathen by proportioning the number and value of the victims to the greatness of the offense, nothing of this kind was so much as allowed by the Hebrew law. The sin offering in every case must be the same, the she-goat—the commonest and cheapest of the domestic animals.* Whole burnt-offerings might be increased, and peace-offerings, those feasts of communion with God, might be indefinitely multiplied; but for the atoning sin-offering only and always the same simple victim. The lesson hereby taught is plain: sacrifices in themselves had no compensatory value. There was no correlation between the animal victim and human sin; ‘for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin’ (Heb. 10:4). The value of sacrifices therefore could be but symbolic. What the symbolism meant it might not be given to the ancient Israelite to know; but it must have been clear, even to him, that they had in themselves no inherent efficacy for the forgiveness of sin. This is brought out still more clearly by the fact that they had an intrinsic ceremonial value. The ‘unclean’ were restored by them to their standing in the theocratic community; ‘the ashes of the heifer’ did ‘sanctify to the purifying of the flesh.’ But only symbolically and in view of character did the sacrifices avail to the restoration of communion between the soul and God.

“Now, to suppose such a system of sacrifice, so unlike that of any other nation, so far-reaching in its meaning, and yet so adapted to a spiritually debased people, keeping alive in them the sense of sin and yet pointing to something better as the true atonement for sin—to suppose such a system to have been evolved by the philosophers of Judea and adopted by the Jews, seems by many degrees more improbable than that it was given them from on high.”

* A difference in the victim was required in the case of a prince or of the high-priest by reason of the conspicuousness of their offenses, and, correspondingly, a smaller offering in the case of extreme poverty; but there was no variation in view of the greatness of the sin.